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The Good Shepherd,

BEING THE

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By JOHN CENNICK.

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
Psalm xxiii. 1.

The Flock of my Pasture are Men, saith the Lord
God. Ezek. xxxiv. 31.

He maketh him Families like a Flock of Sheep.
Psalm cvii. 41.

The Good Shepherd giveth his Life for the Sheep.
John x. 11.

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The Good Shepherd.

JOHN X. 14.

I am the Good Shepherd.

WHOEVER is acquainted with the scriptures know, that in all ages the Lord has been called the Shepherd of his people, and his churches have constantly been looked upon as his flocks. He led Israel through the wilderness like as a shepherd his flock; he led them, like a flock of sheep, by the hands of Moses and Aaron. This was said of him of old, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall carry the lambs in his bosom, and gently lead them that are big with young." And again, "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock, in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep and deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered. I will feed them in a good pasture; they shall lie in a good fold. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God." In the days of Israel's journey through the lands of the desert they were led indeed like sheep, and the tender care of God over them was like that of a shepherd, and their whole journey from Egypt to Canaan became like the rest of the Jewish economy, a shadow of some better thing, namely, the Saviour's pastoral care over poor sinners, who from

the time of their leaving the garden of Eden had wandered like sheep in the wide world, and were lost. "All we, like sheep, had gone astray, we had turned every one to his own way," then the Lord humbled himself to be the Shepherd, and sought us out according to the prophecies which I have mentioned; and as he brought out his chosen people and Israel his elect from their bondage in Egypt like a flock, with a high hand and with a stretched-out arm, so did he find us groaning under the iron yoke of sin and bondsmen to satan, when he came into our spiritual Egypt, where he also was crucified, and there with his hands stretched out he obtained and wrought our deliverance, "and, like a good shepherd, laid down his life for his sheep;" and now has he his church like a flock who are following their shepherd, and returning out of all countries and places back to the mount Sion with everlasting joy upon their heads; and though all do not go up in the same company, nor perhaps will till the last days, yet are we but one fold and under one Shepherd.

The time would fail me to speak much of his tender dealings with this ancient people; how he watched them and led them as a shepherd, nor overdrove his flocks, nor suffered them to mingle with others, but was round about them with his everlasting arms like a wall of fire, to make them lie down and rest safely; or how he fed them from above with manna, and clave and dug springs for them in the rock, of which Moses and the Psalms are full. But I will mention something of David, who was one of the chiefest types of Christ, and by whose name (to signify he should be his very flesh and blood) our Saviour is so frequently called in the prophets.

David.

David was once a shepherd, as Moses had been, before God took him from watching the ewes to lead his people, and both these shepherds had perhaps learned, in their office with their flocks, many things necessary for their higher office, when they became shepherds of God's own purchased flock, the souls of men; and thus the apostles the same, for their toil and waiting in all seasons and weathers to catch fish, was helpful to them when Jesus made them fishers of men. But in David this especially was remarkable, that when he was keeping his father's sheep there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock. Now he did not fly in the danger, nor flight the loss because it was but a lamb, (for he might have thought, it is but one, and it is better twenty lambs be carried away than I risque my life, but he thought otherwise); no, he pursued the lion and the bear, and when they rose against him, he slew them, and took the lamb away, and brought it back safe. Herein his value for his sheep, his care of his father's flock, and his bravery, were evident; and this made him a lively picture of his God and Son our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this manner our Saviour, in a certain parable, speaks of the salvation: he saith, A shepherd who had a hundred sheep and lost one, left the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and went out to seek that he had lost, and did not end his search or give up his care and return till he had found it, and then he laid it upon his shoulders and brought it home rejoicing. Afterwards he acquainted all his friends and neighbours of it, namely, that he had found the sheep that he had lost, and was more glad about that one than of all the rest that went not astray. This he spake of himself, for he is that
good

good Shepherd who kept his Father's innumerable flocks; and when the devil, like a roaring lion, had seized one, namely, the human race, which, however great in our eyes, to him must be only like one lamb out of an hundred, and less, since all the nations of the earth to him are like a drop of the bucket: he did not think, Tush! it is only one lamb, it is but one world, I can make me many with a word speaking; nor did he flight his loss and let it pass unheeded, as if it was far better for ten thousand worlds to perish than he to venture his life and undergo pain and danger; no, he arose from his everlasting throne willingly, and so infinitely he valued us, so faithful was he to his Father's flock, and so tender and loving to us that were lost, that he left all the worlds above, parted as it were with the ninety and nine, and came a far journey of thirty years and upwards, and when he had found us, we were in the mouth of the lion and in the paw of the bear, torn, and polluted and spoiled, and not worth his notice, yet he attacked the enemy and in righteousness made war; he wrestled till his sweat was like great drops of blood falling down to the ground; nor did he give over till he had no whole part, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, but was bruised and sore smitten in body and soul: nor yet did he yield till in his last dying pangs he caught the bear, death, as it were by the beard and slew him, and as he poured out his soul, he trod with such violence on the lion and the dragon, that had deceived the nations so long, that he gave up his prey, and our Shepherd cried out for joy, "It is finished!" and immediately took a part of his spoil (the soul of one of the thieves) with him into paradise, and bid all his angels and saints rejoice with

with him, for now, saith he, "I have found that which I had lost." Yea, he rejoiced more, and there was more joy in the Holy Ghost and among the angels of God over this redemption, this saving his lost sheep, than over all the rest of his vast eternal creation beside. All the heavens from that time to this ring with it, now is come salvation! now the kingdoms of the earth are again become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ. Thus has he merited that great name among his churches, The Good Shepherd that giveth his life for the sheep.

It will be proper now to speak of the sheep whom this Shepherd has redeemed; of the fold in which they enter and are kept; and in what manner they are gathered and brought home to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls: And this I will do first of all, and then speak of some other things mentioned in this chapter out of which I have chosen my text.

In the fall, all had been so ruined and spoiled, and had so lost their first make and nature, that none properly should be called sheep but such as are restored and washed again, and healed by the Shepherd of Israel. Somewhat of the nature of sheep we all have, namely, an inclination to wander, and a being easily frightened and driven farther and farther from our right place, and as sheep, when one at their head breaks bounds and goes astray, all the rest follow; so have we done from our youth up; "we have erred and strayed from his ways like lost sheep." But the innocence and harmless nature, the love to the Shepherd, &c. we have not till our nature is changed by the Holy Ghost.

Those

Those called by our Saviour his sheep, are believers, people who follow him, who hear his voice, who know him, on whom is his mark, who enter the fold by him, and to whom he gives eternal life; they hear his voice. Although all the children of God love the scriptures, and hear joyfully the preaching of the gospel, yet this is not what our good Shepherd means. Many heard him in the days of his flesh, as Herod heard John gladly, who nevertheless, as he tells them, did not hear his voice. To hear his voice, is to have him speak to our hearts, and awaken us out of our dead and carnal state, as it is written, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man and live." He teaches them they are lost and undone, so that they confess it from a certain knowledge and feeling of it inwardly, and no man can persuade them it is not so. Should one try to convince them that they are not so bad, or in a lost or dangerous condition by nature, it would be to them the voice of a stranger, they would not follow it, for they hear not the voice of strangers. But neither is this all, for they hear the voice of their Beloved. He who seemed to speak roughly, like Joseph to his brethren, when he awaked them out of their sinful sleep, he also speaks comfortably like him, and falls on their neck and kisses them. He speaks in the right time, in the time of love, and calls them, saying, Ye are mine! your sins are forgiven. From the time that we live through faith in him, we hear his voice, we understand his mind, he writes it in our hearts, and there speaks and communes with us; and who is a stranger to this, he must not imagine himself of the sheepfold of Jesus Christ.

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“ His sheep follow him.” He putteth his own sheep forth, and he goeth before them, and they follow him. This is part of the parable with which our Saviour began this discourse, and is not so easy to be understood by people in our nation, because with us it is seldom seen that the shepherd goes before his sheep, but generally after them. In other countries where there are wolves and beasts of prey, the shepherds watch their flocks all night, and are so continually with them and so familiar, that the sheep naturally keep near him, and should he go forward, they do too, or does he stop, so do they; and this the shepherd learn the sheep to do, so that, without driving, they can lead their herds in and out of the fold, and into the pastures easily.

Jesus has taught his sheep this lesson. He has so watched over his flock, that, as Jacob said once, “ The sun burnt him by day, and the frost consumed him by night, when he watched his father Laban’s flocks:” so is it true of the good Shepherd: He has laid down his life to save theirs, and has not behaved like an hireling, who flees when he sees a wolf coming; but he has been their Saviour, and they love him, and his life becomes an example to them, that they may tread in his footsteps: they are of a tender conscience, and afraid to do any thing without the Shepherd; they walk where he walked, and go out after him bearing his reproach; and as he was, so are they, like lambs among wolves in this world. They follow him. Natural men can see at what they are aiming, and must own they are followers of the Lamb, and shall follow him about whithersoever he goeth.

They cannot live impure, or careless, or sinful

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lives

lives; the Shepherd did not go that road, neither will they.

They know him. "I know my sheep, he saith, and am known of mine."

They have obtained like precious faith with the saints gone before, and have the Spirit of Christ in them. They know who Jesus is; they are not afraid to call him Lord; they have experienced his almighty power and salvation, and know in whom they believe. He is their own dear God and Saviour, and his eternal life is theirs. This he gives to all believers: "He that believeth, hath everlasting life; and this is life eternal, to know thee the true God." All his people know him, from the least of them to the greatest of them. This high attainment, this blessed length to which they have arrived, so as to be acquainted with God and at peace with him, has not been through any deep study, or uncommon knowledge, or parts or learning in them ("for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light," and babes and little children is the name our Saviour gives them) but it is given to them from above; they have been taught it of God; Jesus has manifested himself to them.

His mark is upon them; his name is upon their foreheads. As a shepherd, when he has found his lost sheep, puts his name and mark upon them, so does the great Shepherd of the sheep; "but it is the secret of God, the new name written, which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it." They have a secret inward assurance that the Beloved has sealed "them, and that their names are graven upon his hands, and set as a seal upon his arm." Of this the Holy Ghost witnesses to them, and
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they being "sealed to the day of redemption, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. No man can pluck them out of the Shepherd's hands." He has charged every destroying angel, "Come not near any man on whom is my mark." The blood of sprinkling is upon their door-posts, the destroyer must pass by and do them no harm: This keeps them a quiet and peaceable people; this comforts them amidst many misfortunes and troubles; surely can they say, "I am the Lord's; his name is upon me."

"They enter into the sheepfold by him." They know how they came among the children of God; they were not born so; they did not come in by having had Abraham to their father; nor did they merit it by their holy life, or purchase it with their alms, but by means of Jesus Christ they entered in; he opened his arms, and they took refuge there; he set open his blood, and they washed there; the veil of his flesh was rent, and they escaped by that new and living way. Had not he stood their friend, they had continued "without among the dogs, and fearful and unbelieving to this day." He became an open door to them, and they entered in and were saved by him.

"He gives them eternal life." This I have spoken of before, for this is to know him, and the very life he lived, the very eternal life he has, who was dead and dies no more, they have also, and shall never die; their bodies may lie wearied down in the chambers of the graves, and upon the bed where he lay, but farther hurt they shall not, they cannot sustain. Their souls cannot die, they cannot taste of death; no bitterness or sting of death shall grieve or trouble them at their departure; they shall live in time and in eternity; "because

Christ, who is their life, lives, therefore shall they live also."

I shall now speak of the sheepfold, "where he causes his sheep to lie down at noon," as Solomon speaks, or "where they dwell alone safely." This is the church of God; for though others have always mingled with his people, and perhaps every visible troop or congregation is a mixed company, yet he has a fold invisibly. His arms surround his flock, and "as the hills stand round about Jerusalem, so the Lord standeth round about his people from this time forth for evermore. He that knows the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names, he knows his sheep, and in the day when he counts up his jewels will spare them, as a man spares his son that serves him." He leads them often out into green pastures, and feeds them upon the hidden manna. They discern the Lord's body, and partake of the droppings of the sanctuary, and drink of "that river which makes glad the city of God." Though others don't know them, or who they are, yet they know, and when any danger is nigh they hasten into the fold, and lie down in the wounds of the Shepherd, whose bleeding hands stretched out, like the wings of an eagle, are the walls of the fold, and all round wait the ministering spirits and armies of the Lord of hosts. Shepherds there are also under the chief shepherd, who are not hirelings, but who feed the flock which God purchased with his own blood; these minister within the fold, and watch and help the flock till the Shepherd eases them of their office, and suffers them to enter where the mixed multitude are no more, but all are sheep round about their Shepherd.

The general way in which the shepherd gathers his flock, is by the preaching of his gospel; but
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herein the Holy Spirit is the chief, if not the only minister, and is not confined to any means. He draws and selects, out of all lands and nations, souls for our Saviour; he gives them ears to hear his voice. He makes them "a willing people in the day of his power," and leads them obediently to follow the Lamb: He manifests and reveals Christ and his love to them, so that they know him: He sets the mark upon their foreheads, and "he seals them to the day of redemption." He directs poor, distressed, and miserable people to enter in by Jesus and be saved; and it is he that inspires them with life eternal.

But, beside all that I have said, this must be observed, that there is no way to become a child of God, or to enter his sheepfold, but by the door of Christ. Whoever attempts to make himself righteous, or to attain salvation, or to go to heaven any other way, are like such as enter not the house by the door, but break in some other way, and are thieves and robbers, and so shall God treat all such as strive by other means to come to him.

Again, we must learn from such men who have crept into the ministry for a morsel of bread, men "who preach for hire and divine for money," or, as our Saviour calls them, Hirelings, that though "they care not for the sheep, but feed themselves and not the flock," yet we have a good Shepherd to whom we can apply safely, one "who lays down his life for the sheep." And since such men as I have mentioned are in all places, let it teach us therefore not to slight all, or despise the holy office of labourers in God's vineyard, but let us "count them worthy of double honour who rule well," and cleave the closer to our only High-Priest and Pastor Jesus, and put no confidence in any other.

Again,

Again, there is yet another doctrine to be mentioned, and that is, that our "good Shepherd laid down his life willingly." He was not obliged or forced. "He had power to lay it down; or, if he pleased, he had power to take it again." The offering himself to die for his people, and desiring "the sword to smite him the Shepherd for the sheep that were scattered," was his free love. He was a free-will-offering." His mercy only led him on, and therefore does his Father love him, therefore do his sheep love him, and shall for ever and ever.

But now, how happy must they be who have a part in his favour, "who are his people and the sheep of his pasture?" How safe who have his Father to take care that "no man shall pluck them out of his hands?" How great mercy is it that he invites us all into this grace; and has spoken all his parables with this view, that lost men might turn to "the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, and be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting!" May you all, my dear brethren and sisters, be wise, and join with the little flock over which he is the universal Overseer and only Head and Lord, and obtain of him the assurance and confidence that "the Lord is your Shepherd, so shall ye not want!"

To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

A H Y M N.

I.

THE Lord, my Shepherd, he
 So careful is of me,
 That I shall lack no more,
 Or mourn that I'm so poor :
 No ; now I quiet am,
 I'm rich, I have the Lamb.

II.

In pastures ever green,
 The spotless Nazarene
 His child shall gently lead ;
 And I shall freely feed
 On meat indeed, and wine,
 Drain'd from himself, the vine.

III.

By rivers still and deep
 Shall I my vigils keep ;
 His word my staff shall be,
 When bow'd with misery ;
 When weary, I may rest
 On my dear Shepherd's breast.

IV.

In heat, the cross is made
 For all the sheep a shade ;
 There under get they all,
 More safe than in a stall ;
 No thief or robber there
 May any time appear.

V.

Salvation, as a bound,
 Environs us around :
 This keeps the fold secure,
 The Lamb stays at the door,
 That no disturbing sin
 May ever enter in.

VI.

VI.

Before the sheepfold's gate
I often see him wait;
His ensign in his hand,
His fleece with crimson stain'd;
Thus tenderly defends
The Shepherd all his friends.

VII.

When in this posture I
The Lamb of God descry,
I fall on both my knees,
And my Beloved praise,
Who keeps me safe and sure,
Nor do I care for more.

VIII.

I trust me to his care,
And bid farewell to fear;
Because I this believe,
I can no harm receive,
But out of danger am,
Protected by the Lamb.

F I N I S.

